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ABSTRACT

In an effort to provide prospective teachers with chances to reflect on their professional competence, and to demonstrate their teaching effectiveness and growth, the teacher education program at California State University, Los Angeles, decided to require students to develop portfolios. All students were introduced to the portfolio format during the required introduction to teaching course. The portfolios were expected to fulfill California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) professional standards that demand evidence of achievement. Portfolios were to include evidence of competencies gained from courses and evidence of student teaching competencies in 10 CTC areas. The department recommended that students use CTC and NCATE standards to serve as guides for portfolio formats. A sample format would contain an introduction and information on classroom environment, instructional planning/implementation, diverse strategies/materials, assessment/reflections, professional development, and community involvement. Portfolio development was expected to begin with the introductory teaching course and to continue as the student progressed through the subsequent course work and student teaching experiences. Faculty were concerned about portfolio advisement and decided to have portfolio checkpoints and advisement opportunities during student teaching assignments. A sample portfolio table of contents and a course/skills checklist are included. (JB)

ED 391 806

PORTFOLIOS: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL USED BY PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS TO ENCOURAGE SELF-EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to describe one way in which portfolios are being used effectively in the teacher education program at California State University, Los Angeles. The teacher constructed portfolio is intended to serve as a self- as well as an institutional evaluative instrument. The described portfolio fulfills an assessment purpose as it illustrates and provides evidence of teaching competencies and professional growth. Additionally, the on-going assessment instrument will become a valuable tool for both new and experienced teachers as they reflect on ways to grow professionally.

Portfolios: An Effective Tool Used by Prospective Teachers to Encourage Self-evaluation and Improvement

INTRODUCTION:

No instrument smaller than the world is fit to measure
men and women: Examinations measure Examinees.

Sir Walter Raleigh

If we as educators are sincerely dedicated to the development of successful and acceptable evaluation programs, our focus must be on alternate models that measure the overall competence of teachers. These alternative models must include opportunities for prospective as well as experienced teachers to reflect on and self-examine their performance, skills and knowledge for the purpose of improving their teaching competencies. Too often self-assessment does not hold a prominent place in the evaluation of teachers. Historically, the pre-service teacher is evaluated by professors, cooperating classroom teachers, and by university supervisors. Most often, on-going observations and conferences as well as the final student teaching written evaluations provide the student teacher with feedback related to his/her level of competencies. Checklists and various forms of testing have been used to evaluate teaching competence and performance; however, no single checklist or other form of assessment can fully document effective teaching. Missing links in this scenario are:

1. a process that provides prospective teachers with opportunities to reflect on their professional competence, and
2. a product that demonstrates evidence of teaching effectiveness and growth.

**A teacher constructed portfolio is one tool that can be used to assess as well as guide the development of prospective teachers, and to encourage reflection about professional development.

Based on the above stated concerns, the Division of Curriculum and Instruction faculty at California State University, Los Angeles began to examine the process of portfolio development as a means to guide prospective teachers as they progress through the credential program. During the initial planning stages, the discussions focused on an inquiry into basic questions related to specific portfolio attributes.

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?:

By definition, a portfolio is a collection of a person's best work over a period of time. Portfolios can be a collection of information that provides evidence about a teacher's effectiveness. A portfolio might be organized in a three-ring binder with tabs, table of contents, personal resume, teaching units, etc. The *process* of portfolio development as well as the *product* are emphasized as major purposes. The process of portfolio development encourages reflection among new and prospective teachers. As they begin to organize a professional portfolio they begin to reflect about their understanding of professional roles and responsibilities. As products, they demonstrate evidence of a teacher's effectiveness and growth (Uphoff, James, 1989).

WHO SHOULD DEVELOP A PORTFOLIO?

It was determined that all students entering a credential program at California State University, Los Angeles will be guided in the development of portfolios. Since all students must register in an introduction to teaching course before they are officially admitted to the credential program, it was determined that this is the appropriate place to introduce all education students to the format/purpose/use of teacher constructed portfolios.

WHY DEVELOP A PORTFOLIO?

A portfolio has two major purposes.

1. The process of portfolio development encourages prospective teachers to evaluate-to reflect on the many elements involved in being a successful teacher. This reflection encourages problem solving and effective decision making (Uphoff).

2. The material in the portfolio provides the prospective teacher with organized, tangible evidence of growth and accomplishments. This evidence of competencies can serve as documentation for certification by state agencies-- as prospective teachers are evaluated in relation to a predetermined list of competencies required of them before they are recommended for a teaching credential. These competencies are embodied in standards set forth in state as well as in national documents (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education). For example:

> **The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (April, 1993) "expects institutions to verify each candidate's attainment of the Standards in Category V prior to recommending the candidate for a teaching credential" (p. 22). This verification is not the *simple recognition of good teaching* --it is instead a *systematic way of describing and documenting* candidate competence and performance.**

Additionally, NCATE Standards (1994) clearly require "that a candidate's competency to begin his/her professional role in schools is assessed prior to completion of the program and/or recommendation for licensure". Criteria for compliance specify that "a candidate's mastery of a program's stated exit criteria or outcomes is assessed through the use of multiple sources of data such as a culminating experience, portfolios, interviews, videotaped and observed performances in schools, standardized tests, and course grades" (NCATE Standards 11.D; Indicator 39, p. S-6).

PORTFOLIO INCLUSIONS:

As the responsibility of guiding prospective teachers belongs to all faculty, it is helpful to reflect on specific, existing course requirements that might be included in a portfolio as "evidence" of competence gained from that class. (For example, a professor who teaches a methods class might require students to develop a series of lessons or a unit of study. This requirement could easily become "evidence" in a portfolio.)

In addition to the inclusion of evidence that illustrates teaching competencies, the prospective teachers should include evidence of professional development experiences- as well as resource information gathered during student teaching. The prospective teacher is expected to write a reflection page related to the purpose and effectiveness of included "pieces of evidence". When the student completes all credential requirements, the final evaluations prepared by the supervising classroom teacher and by the university professor will be included in the portfolio. The following list of the California Commission of Teacher Credentialing Standards has been included to provide guidelines for the inclusion of pieces of evidence that document teaching competencies.

California CTC Standards 22-31 (pp.23-32):

22. Student Rapport and Classroom Environment:
Candidate establishes and sustains a level of student rapport and a classroom environment that promotes learning and equity, and that fosters mutual respect among persons in a class.

23. Curricular and Instructional Planning Skills:
Candidate prepares at least one unit plan and several lesson plans that include goals, objectives, strategies, activities, materials and assessment plans that are well defined & coordinated with each other.

24. Diverse and Appropriate Teaching:
Candidate prepares and uses instructional strategies, activities and materials that are appropriate for students with diverse needs, interests and learning styles.

25. Student Motivation, Involvement and Conduct:
Candidate motivates and sustains student interest, involvement and appropriate conduct equitably during a variety of class activities.

26. Presentation Skills:
Candidate communicates effectively by presenting ideas and instructions clearly and meaningfully to students.

27. Students Diagnosis, Achievement and Evaluation:
Candidate identifies students' prior attainments, achieves significant instructional objectives, and evaluates the achievements of the students in the class.

28. Cognitive Outcomes of Teaching:
Candidate improves the ability of students in a class to evaluate information, think analytically, and reach sound conclusions.

29. Affective Outcomes of Teaching:
Candidate fosters positive student attitudes toward the subjects learned, the students themselves, and their capacity to become independent learners.

3O. Capacity to Teach Crossculturally:
Candidate demonstrates compatibility with, and ability to teach, students who are different from the candidate. The differences between students and the candidate should include ethnic, cultural, gender, linguistic and socio-economic differences.

31. Professional Obligations:
Candidate adheres to high standards of professional conduct, cooperates effectively with other adults in the school community, and develops professionally through self-assessment and collegial interactions with other members of the profession.

<u>PORTFOLIO FORMAT</u>:

The included format (p. 5) summarizes the major competencies indicated in the CTC guidelines as well as the general NCATE standards. This format serves to guide prospective teachers as they organize their "pieces of evidence" that document professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills. The broad categories provide students the necessary guidance and structure; yet, allows for a certain amount of creative freedom when documenting or including their particular "pieces of evidence".

PORTFOLIO FORMAT

Section	Examples that Show Evidence of Competency
1. TABLE OF CONTENTS	
2. INTRODUCTION	biography; philosophy of education statement
3. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	organization/management plans; bulletin board photographs/ ideas
4. INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING/ IMPLEMENTATION	unit plans; daily lessons over time to show growth; lesson videotaped
5. DIVERSE STRATEGIES/MATERIALS	examples of student work/ analyzed and/or evaluated; diverse strategies--evident in lesson/unit plans; use of diverse materials; reinforcement and challenge activities; center plans; case studies
6. ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS	written reflections/ assessment related to teaching performance
7. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	seminars/ in-service attendance; letters of recommendation; student teaching evaluations; resource list; resume
8. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	parent conferences; PTA attendance; professional organizations; community service clubs

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT EACH "PIECE OF EVIDENCE" ENTERED IN THE PORTFOLIO SHOULD INCLUDE A REFLECTION THAT EXPLAINS THE REASONS FOR INCLUSION. (THIS MIGHT BE IN THE FORM OF JOURNALS.)

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURES /TIME LINE:

Although the focus is on beginning the portfolio in the introduction to teaching class, portfolio development will continue as students progress through the subsequent course work and student teaching experiences. Each required class embodies the knowledge and competencies stated in the CTC as well as in the NCATE standards. The students are expected to include evidence of these teaching competencies as they progress through the required course work. To assure that each credential student has opportunities to develop and show evidence of these teaching skills, the included matrix was developed to indicate where these competencies appear in course work. (See the attached list of courses and the corresponding CTC competency requirements, page 8). The following suggestions have been included to serve as guidelines:

1. **A professor may use an existing course requirement to guide students in developing and reflecting on an assignment that could become part of the portfolio.**

2. **In each required course(s) students will review their portfolio progress at least once during the quarter with the professor (or an advisor).**

3. **During the student teaching assignments, the university supervisor (in collaboration with the master teacher) will guide students in selecting meaningful evidence that reflects teaching competencies.**

4. **Portfolio development progress will be indicated on each student teaching evaluation.**

5. **The STUDENT-TEACHING EXIT CHECKLIST will show evidence of the students' second semester progress in portfolio development.**

6. **The portfolio might not be assigned a grade; however, each student should be required to show evidence in each competency area.**

ON-GOING CONCERNS:

During faculty deliberations, issues related to faculty advisement were raised. The faculty agreed that each professor should be responsible for providing student support related to specific course content and requirements. Additional portfolio checkpoints and advisement will occur during the student teaching assignments. Evidence of portfolio development will be indicated on the final student teaching exit form. The C & I faculty voted to implement portfolio development during the Spring, 1995 Quarter. Workshops have been projected for the Fall, 1995 quarter to provide opportunities for on-going evaluation of the implementation plans, and to allow faculty to share practices they may have discovered related to different and more effective ways to guide students during the development of their portfolios.

REFLECTIONS /STUDENT RESPONSES:

The value of portfolio development appears to be accepted by faculty as well as by prospective teachers. Faculty support may be partially due to prior successes in portfolio development related to their own disciplines or programs. One example is a pilot program in which a professor taught course work and advised a selected group of students as they made connections between their required course work and the subsequent student teaching experiences. It provided an opportunity to observe and guide the reflection and growth process as the prospective teachers made theory/application connections. This continued contact provided an opportunity to elicit student thought related to the value of portfolio development. The following comments were made by students at various points in the credential program.

1. Lisa Wilcox- a prospective teacher completing her last student teaching experience: "Portfolio development provides an opportunity to reflect on what I tried and on what was successful. It provides an opportunity to revise and adapt to new and different situations and levels. In every lesson I find something to change- something I would do a bit different. When you reflect-and write it down- you do not lose the potential for professional growth."

2. Sarah Montes-a prospective teacher completing her last student teaching assignment: "A portfolio is a way to showcase my best efforts. It provides an opportunity to reflect-assess-and modify lessons during student teaching. As a prospective teacher it provides concrete examples of my teaching competencies. It is an on-going organizational tool during the credential program--one that can be carried on to the realities of my classroom."

3. Daniel Perryman: A new CSULA graduate who is currently teaching children with special learning needs: "The portfolio benefitted me as a student teacher as it helped me organize. Now it helps me look at long term goals to assess where I've been and where I'm going in my career.

4.Jessica Jung: A new teacher just beginning her job search. "The value of developing a portfolio is it helped me organize and analyze my areas of strengths and weaknesses." Recently she shared her portfolio at an Education Fair on campus. She felt the interviewers were quite impressed with her portfolio. She said, "it was easy to present myself during interviews; the portfolio is a tool to show my competencies; it made me feel comfortable to interview."

These student reactions serve to illustrate that the greatest value of a portfolio may be its usefulness as a process that elicits reflection on present skills as well as on ways in which teachers might continue to grow through self-assessment. It appears to be an effective, alternate evaluation tool that can be used effectively to guide teachers at all levels in their careers. The faculty at CSULA is continuing their own on-going reflections as they advise students and discover more effective ways to help students show evidence of their professional growth as competent, reflective teachers.

CTC

MULTIPLE SUBJECT PROGRAM COURSES WHICH ENCOMPASS KNOWLEDGE AND/ OR SKILLS

	EDCI 300A	EDCI 300B	EDFN 413	EDFN 414	EDEL 400	EDEL 401	EDEL 402	EDEL 405	ART 400	MUSIC 400	PE 420	EDEL 403	EDEL 404	EDIT430 447+CS160	EDSP 400	HS 456
Student Rapport and Classroom Management																
Curricular & Instructional Planning Skills																
Diverse and Appropriate Teaching																
Student Motivation, Involvement and Conduct																
Presentation Skills																
Students' Diagnosis, Achievement, & Evaluation																
Cognitive Outcomes of Teaching																
Capacity to Teach Crossculturally																
Professional Growth																

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